

Message Text

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63 L

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2466

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BOGOTA FOR VANCE; ARA FOR LUERS; S/NM FOR ENRSTAND DUGSTAD
DEA FOR EOI-CUSACK

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: SNAR MX

SUBJECT: PRESS PUBLICITY CONCERNING MEETING OF ATTORNEYS GENRAL

REF A MEXICO, B. 75 MEXICO 11441,

1. SUMMARY: JAN. 19 EXCELSIOR FRONTPAGED ANOTHER (REF A) STORY BY THEIR WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT ARMANDO VARGAS. THIS TIME REPORTING DEC. 29 ACAPULCO BEETING BETWEEN ATTORNEY GENRAL LEVI AND MEXICAN ATTORNEY GENERAL OJEDA PAULLADA. FULL TEXT IS TRANSMITTED BELOW. WE BELEIVE THAT POTENTIALLY MOST EMBARRASSING STATEMENT IN STORY IS THAT REFERRING TO PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM PRES FORD T PRES ECHEVERRIA (SIC) EXPRESSING DEEP CONCERN OVER MEXICAN NARCOTICS PROBLEM. THUS FAR WE HAVE NO INDICATION OF GOM REACTION. EMD SUMMARY.

2. BEGIN TEXT: "SECRET MEETING OF OJEDA AND LEVI IN ACAPULDO". "THEY SPOKE ABOUT THE NARCOTIS TRAFFIC". "THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (U.S.) CARRIED A MESSAGE: IN IT FORD EXPRESSED HIS WORRY TO LUIS ECHEVERRIA". BY ARMANDO VARGAS, EXCELSIOR CORRESPONDENT WASHINGTON, JAN. 18.

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PRESIDENT GERADL FORD SENT A PERSONAL MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT LUIS ECHEVERRIA, IN WHICH HE EXPRESSED TO HIM HIS CONCERN OVER THE INCREASING ILLEGAL HEROIN TRAFFIC FROM MEXICO TO THE U.S.

THE PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE WAS CARRIED FROM WASHINGTON TO MEXICO BY ATTORNEY GENERAL EDWARD LEVI, WHO MET WITH HIS COLLEAGUE PEDRO OJEDA PAULLADA FOR MORE THAN SEVEN HOURS DURING THE AFTER-NOON AND EVENING OF DEC. 29 IN THE HOTEL ACAPULCO PRINCESS.

THE MEETING BETWEEN LEVI AND OJEDA PAULLADA WAS CONFIRMED TO EXCELSIOR HERE BY THE DEPT OF JUSTICE PRESS SPOKESMAN, BOB MAVEL.

FEW DETAILS CONCERNING THE PROLONGED INFORMAL MEETING WERE REVEALED TO THIS CORRESPONDENT BY ASSISTANTS OF THOSE SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN WHO HAD BEEN PRESSUING FORD TO PUT AN END TO THE SO:ALLED "MEXICAN CONNECTION".

NINETY PERCENT OF THE HEROIN NOW ENTERING THE U.S. COMES FROM MEXICO, A COUNTRY WHICH HAS REPLACED TURKEY, FRANCE AND SOUTEAST ASIA AS THE PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF DRUGS FOR THE 500,000 U.S. HEROIN ADDICTS.

THE GOVERNMENT IN WASHINGTON HAS ESTIMATED THAT IN 1976 MEXICO COULD PRODUCE UP TO 10 TONS OF HEROIN, IF THE EXTENSIVE CULTIVATION OF POPPY IN THE SIERRA MADRE IS NOT DESTROYED IN TIME.

THE JOURNEY -- UNANNOUNCED -- OF THE U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL TO MEXICO DEMONSTRATES THAT THE "MEXICAN CONNECTION" TODAY CONSTITUTES THE MOST URGENT PROBLEM IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND MEXICO.

TWO DAYS BEFORE LEVI LEFT INCOGNITO FOR ACAPULCO FOR HIS INFORMAL MEETING WITH OJEDA PAULADA, FORD SAID IN VAIL, COLORADO, THAT A GREAT CAMPAIGN TO CURB THE ENTRANCE OF DURGS INTO THE U.S. HAD BEEN MOUNTED.

THE PRESIDENT INDICATED THAT THE CAMPAIGN INCLUDED PERSONAL CONVERSATIONS WITH THE LEADERS OF MEXICO, TURKEY AND COLOMBIA.

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"DRUG ADDICTION IS A TRAGIC NATIONAL PROBLEM WHICH UNDERMINES THE VITALITY OF OUR NATION AND CONSTITUTES AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE INCREASING INDEX OF CRIME". SAID FORD IN A WRITTEN DECLARATION GIVEN IN THE SNOWY HILLS OF COLORADO.

IN THE SAME DECLARATION FORD REVEALED THAT HE HAD SPOKEN PERSONALLY WITH THE CHIEFS OF STATE OF MEXICO, COLOMBIA AND TURKEY "IN AN EFFORT TO STRENGTHEN THE COOPERATION WITH THE

NATIONS INVOLVED IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE ILICIT DRUG TRAFFIC".

THE DECLARATION DID NOT SPECIFY HOW OR WHEN FORD SPOKE PERSONALLY WITH ECHEVERRIA CONCERNING THE BATTLE AGAINST THE DRUG TRAFFIC.

THE PRESIDENT THEN ANNOUNCED THAT "OWING TO MY PERSONAL CONCERN ABOUT THE MEXICAN HEROIN PROBLEM", HE HAD ORDERED SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY A. KISSINGER TO "EXPRESS TO THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT MY PERSONAL CONCERN OVER THE NEED TO EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE CONTROLS".

PRESUMABLY, KISSINGER AND LEVI ACHIEVED AN AGREEMENT WITH FORD IN ORDER THAT IT WOULD BE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL WHO WOULD TRANSMIT THE PRESIDENTIAL CONCERN TO THE GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO.

LEVI SAID IN A DEC. 12 LETTER TO THE INFLUENTIAL SENATOR FROM ILLINOIS, CHARLES H. PERCY, THAT HE HAD MET ONCE WITH OJEDA PAULLADA IN WASHINGTON, AND THAT HE WAS TRYING TO ARRANGE ANOTHER INFORMAL MEETING WITH HIS COLLEAGUE IN MEXICO.

THE MEETING TOOK PLACE THE 29TH OF DECEMBER IN ACAPULCO AND WAS ATTENDED ALSO BY AMBASSADOR JOVA AND ALEJANDRO GERTZ, THE CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR FOR THE MEXICAN ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE FOR DESTRUCTION OF OPIUM POPPY CULTIVATION AND THE CONTROL OF ILICIT TRAFFIC IN DRUGS TO THE U.S.

THE (U.S.) ATTORNEY GNERAL LATER INFORMED PERCY THAT IN ACAPULCO HE DISCUSSED WITH OJEDA PAULLADA THE NEED FOR EQUIPMENT IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE A GREATER EFFICIENCY IN THE CAMPAIGN TO DESTORY THE OPIUM POPPIES ALREADY SOWN IN THE SIERRA MADR.

"ALL THE NEEDS FOR EQUIPMENT HAVE BEEN ATTENDED TO", LEVI LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ASSURED THE SENATOR. END TEXT.

3. COMMENT: THIS STORY BASICALLY FACTUAL, EXCEPT THAT MR. LEVI'S MESSAGE FROM PRES FORD WAS DIRECTED TO OJEDA RATHER THAN PRES ECHEVERRIA (REF A). WE BELIEVE THE POTENTIALLY MOST EMBARASSING PART OF THIS ACCOUNT CONCERNS THE PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM PRES FORD; HOWEVER, WE THUS FAR HAVE RECEIVED NO REACTION FROM THE ATTORNEY GNERAL'S OFFICE. WE INTEND TO REFER ANY PRESS QUESTIONS TO THE GOM.
THOMPSON

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